

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 AID-05 IGA-02 ACDA-05 OMB-01

TRSE-00 EUR-12 MC-02 EA-07 /077 W

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R 261720Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3970

INFO AMEMBASSY BANJUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAKAR 1167

EO. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PFOR, GA

SUBJ: THE GAMBIA AND ARMS RESTRAINTS

REF: STATE 20621

1. DISCUSSION OF ARMS RESTRAINTS HAS MODEST APPLICABILITY TO THE GAMBIA, WHICH VIRGUALLY ALONE IN AFRICA HAS NO MILITARY FORCES. SECURITY IN THIS SMALL COUNTRY OF ONE-HALF MILLION IS MAINTAINED BY LEAN, EFFICIENT POLICE FORCE NUMBERING ABOUT 750. WITHIN THIS ORGANIZATION THERE IS PARA-MILITARY FIELD FORCE OF ABOUT 250 WT CH FUNCTIONS SOMEWHAT AS SMALL ARMY. THERE ARE PLANS TO DOUBLE THE SIZE OF FIELD FORCE THROUGH CREATION OF ENGINEERING COMPANY IN 1976. DOUBLING OF FIELD FORCE TO STRENGTH OF 500 WILL RESULT IN TOTAL STRENGTH OF POLICE AND FIELD FORCE OF 1,000 I.E.

PRESENT PLANNED

POLICE 500 500

FIELD FORCE 250 500

TOTAL POLICE FORCE UHP 1,000

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THIS INCREASE INF THE FIELD FORCE IS EXPECTED TO BE
USED FOR RUAL CONSTRUCTION AND OTHER NATION-BUILDING PROJECTS.

2. THE GAMBIA POLICE ARE ARMED WITH WEAPONS LEFT BEHIND BY
GREAT BRITAIN AT INDEPENDENCE 1965. REQUESTS WERE MADE TO
LONDON TO MODERNIZE THESE OBSOLESCEENT ARMS, BUT THE GAMBIA
WAS TOLD IT COULD ONLY RECEIVE BRITISH WEAPONS ON CASH BASIS.
THE GAMBIA THEN TURNED TO COMMUNIST SUPPLIERS, AND IN THE PST
FEW MONTHS HAS RECEIVED GRATIS 500 SOVIET SUBMACHINE GUNS,
AND SUFFICIENT CHINESE SMALL ARMS TO EQUIP A BATTALION.
NONE OF THESE ARMS HAVE YET BEEN USED BY THE POLICE.

3. THE ONLY PLAUSIBLE THREAT TO THE GAMBIA IS POSED BY
SENEGAL, AND IN ANY FIGHT BETWEEN THE TWO, GAMBIA WOULD
QUICKLY LOSE. COMMUNIST ARMS HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED PRESUMABLY
MORE FOR PRESTIGE REASONS, THAN AS MEANINGFUL DETERRENT
TO SENEGAL.

4. THE GAMBIA IS PURCHASING AN ARMED PATROL BOAT FROM
GREAT BRITAIN, TO BE USED BY THE POLICE IN APPREHENDING
FISHING VESSELS WHICH ILLEGALLY OPERATE IN GAMBIA WATERS.
NO OTHER LARGE MILITARY ITEMS ARE KNOWN TO BE UNDER
GAMBIA CONSIDERATION EITHER FOR PURCHASE, OR AS GIFTS.
IT IS PRESENTLY INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE GAMBIA WOULD CONTEMPLATE
ACQUIRING SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS SUCH AS JET AIRCRAFT,
MISSILES, OR MODERN TANKS.

5. THE GAMBIA MIGHT BE INTETERESTED IN SOME REGIONAL
SECURITY ARRANGEMENT WHICH GUARANTEED ITS INTEGRITY VIS-
A-VIS SENEGAL. HOWEVER, THE GAMBIA REALISTICALLY HAS
CONCLUDED THAT ITS BEST POLICY TOWARD SENEGAL IS ONE OF
COOPERATION AND MUTUAL TOLERANCE, AVOIDING CONTENTIOUS ACTIONS
WHICH COULD PROVOKE ITS BIG NEIGHBOR.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARAMILITARY FORCES, REPORTS, ARMS CONTROL INSPECTION, POLICE FORCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976DAKAR01167
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760074-1034
From: DAKAR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760211/aaaaajby.tel
Line Count: 95
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 20621
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 MAY 2004 by ellisoob>; APPROVED <12 OCT 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE GAMBIA AND ARMS RESTRAINTS
TAGS: MILI, PFOR, GA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006